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Friday August 4, 2006

State analysts explain new ag scoring system

By BRENDA S. EDWARDS
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LIBERTY - Two project analysts from the Governor's Office of Agricultural Policy explained the scoring of applicants who want to participate in farm programs with the help of state funds.

Todd Harp and Nick Hoover talked about changes in the programs to a large group of farmers at the Casey County Agricultural Development Council Thursday night.

The Casey County Agricultural Development Council will meet 7 p.m. Tuesday at the county extension service office to discuss a new scoring system for farmers participating in a cost-share state program.

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Chairman Greg Goode said the board will work out a scorecard for the new system implemented this year by the Governor's Office of Agricultural Policy for administering agricultural development funds.

Joyce Cardenas, who works with the sheep and goat programs, and James Young, administrator of the cattle programs in the county, are not happy about the new scoring system. They like the first-come, first-served method since they still have waiting lists of people wanting funds.

State program analyst Nick Hoover said the new guidelines for scoring are for all model programs approved after Jan. 1, 2006. He suggested one scoring be done for all programs to make it easier, but Cardenas said the goat and sheep programs are different from the others.

Pat Williams, who takes care of the forage and fencing program applicants in Casey, thinks people on waiting lists should get more points in scoring than new applicants.

Cattlemen's Association unhappy

Hoover said most people are happy about the new scoring program, however, Young disagrees.

"The Cattlemen's Association does not want to do the scoring program," said Young. "They want to put the names in a hat and draw them out." He's not happy doing away with the waiting list because some people have waited a long time to get funds.

"The Cattlemen's Association may not be interested in administering the program if it gets so complex and more paperwork," said Young.

Some counties let an agency in a neighboring county do the scoring process, said Hoover.

Hoover also suggested the county council make the scoring rules and also keep

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the applications for several years as proof of participation.

The administrator names a committee to score applicants, the county council reviews the documents, then forwards them to the state office for final approval, Hoover said.

"If the county council does not agree with the administrator on applicants, they can ask that they be redone," said Hoover.

Changes caused by abuse in the system

Changes in guidelines for administering the programs have come about because of abuse in the system, said Hoover. Some applicants did not use the money for what it was intended and the state board looks at ways to make the program better and have more participants each year.

He said participants can only be involved in one program at a time, but when the project is finished, they can apply for other funds.

Those on the waiting list in 2005 must reapply for 2006 funds, Hoover said.

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